

## Thomas Edison

Thomas Alva Edison was called Alva, or Al by his family. He was a very curious child. He was always asking questions. Even his mother, who had once been a schoolteacher could not answer all his questions. He would experiment to try to find the answers. Once he tried to hatch some eggs by sitting on them. Another time he accidentally burned down the family's barn.

The teacher told someone she thought there was something wrong with Alva; that he was "addled" . He told his mother and they took him out of the school. He only went to school for 3 months in his whole life. Afterwards , he was taught at home.

He wanted to experiment. To make money for his experiments, he went to work at age 12 selling newspapers and candy on a train. When he had some spare time on the train, he would do experiments in the baggage car.

When he was 16 he went to work for the telegraph office sending messages.

He became nearly deaf due to an injury to his ears. He later said he didn't mind being deaf because it helped him to concentrate.

When he was 22 years old he went to New York. He only had \$1 in his pocket. He hunted for a job during the day, and at night he slept in the basement of a gold company. He watched everything around him very closely. Some equipment broke down and Edison was able to fix it because he had been watching it work before he went to sleep each night. The owners gave him a job. He improved the machine so much the company paid him \$40,000 for his invention. He started the American Telegraph Works in New Jersey.

He built a laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey. It was here with his employees he made many of his inventions. He would work night after night, and sometimes he would fall asleep at his workbench. His wife wouldn't see him for days at a time.

He and his team worked to make a light bulb which would burn for a long time without burning out. They tried 1,500 materials and nothing worked well. Finally he tried a new material in the filament that burned nearly 200 hours.

After he had made the light bulb, he worked to make a power system so people could use the bulb. In 1882 he flipped a switch and 85 houses in New York City had electric lights for the first time.

Thomas Edison was probably the world's greatest inventor. He had a patent on 1,093 inventions. In addition to the electric light, he also invented the phonograph , a camera to take motion pictures, a cement mixer, the automatic telegraph, and he improved Alexander Graham Bell's telephone.

Biography at <http://gardenofpraise.com/ibdediso.htm>